

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. – 19. (Canceled).

20. (Currently Amended) An applicator for an electrosurgical instrument, alternatively for argon-plasma coagulation and cutting, also argon-supported, comprising:

a gas and a high frequency current terminal at a first end of said applicator;

a cutting electrode ~~attached to a gas and high frequency current supply pipe~~ proximate to a second end of said applicator, distal to said first end;

an insulating cap configured to detachably fasten the applicator on a handle of the instrument;

a gas and high frequency current supply pipe formed of an electrically conductive material and attached to said cutting electrode, said pipe forming a passage that communicates a gas from said gas and high frequency current terminal to a location proximate to said cutting electrode, said electrically conductive material of said pipe conducting a high frequency current that drives said cutting electrode from said gas and high frequency current terminal to said cutting electrode;

an insulating casing tube displaceable relative to a common longitudinal axis of the applicator for exposing or covering the cutting electrode, with the casing tube surrounding the gas and high frequency current supply pipe over a longitudinal section, and a collar or an external right-angle bend at a distal end of the casing tube; and

at least one radially surrounding gas-sealing inhibiting device arranged between an inside of the casing tube and an outside of the gas and high frequency current supply pipe, wherein the inhibiting device allows that a respective position be frictionally fixed at any location of a path of displacement of the casing tube.

21. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the inhibiting device is located in a portion of a proximal extension of the insulating cap.

22. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 21, wherein the path of displacement is defined by a hitting contact of the collar or the external right-angle bend on the casing tube with an inwardly projecting edge of the proximal extension of the insulating cap and with a portion for fastening the current supply pipe in the insulating cap.

23. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 20, further comprising a consumption-resistant hollow cylindrical, partially outwardly projecting insert arranged at a proximal outer end of the casing tube.

24. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the current supply pipe includes a radially surrounding groove or a corresponding notch on its outside for accommodating the inhibiting device.

25. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the casing tube includes an inwardly directed, radially surrounding groove or a corresponding notch for accommodating the inhibiting device.

26. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the inhibiting device comprises at least one of an O-ring, a profiled elastic sealing strip, and a closed leaf spring.

27. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 22, wherein the collar or the external right-angle bend at the distal end of the casing tube effect, in conjunction with a cylindrical inner recess of the insulating cap extension, an additional radial and axial guidance for the casing tube.

28. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 22, wherein the collar or the external right-angle bend comprise a groove for accommodating an additional inhibiting device.

29. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 28, wherein the additional inhibiting device includes an elastic sealing ring.

30. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the insulating cap has a shape of a truncated cone, with a cap closing piece being inserted into a hollow cylindrical recess of an upper surface of the truncated cone.

31. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 30, wherein the cap closing piece forms a proximal extension of the insulating cap.

32. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 30, wherein the cap closing piece includes an internal collar at an outer end.

33. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 30, wherein the distal end of the casing tube is guided and retained by the cap closing piece.

34. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 23, wherein the consumption-resistant insert is made of ceramics.

35. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 20, wherein the cutting electrode is attached at a proximal end of an inside of the gas and high frequency current supply pipe.

36. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 35, wherein the cutting electrode comprises a fastening support pipe at its distal end.

37. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 36, wherein the cutting electrode can be adjusted via the fastening support pipe for obtaining a substantially coaxial position relative to the casing tube or the consumption-resistant insert, for achieving an optimal surrounding gas flow in all cases in which the applicator is used.

38. (Previously Presented) An applicator according to claim 30, wherein the cap closing piece is integrally connected to the hollow cylindrical recess of the cap.

39. (Currently Amended) An applicator for an electrosurgical instrument, comprising:

a supply pipe ~~configured to communicate a gas flow and a high frequency current~~ formed of an electrically conductive material;

an electrode attached to said supply pipe;

an insulating member configured to surround a longitudinal section of said supply pipe; and

a sealing member configured to provide a seal between an outer circumference of said supply pipe and an inner circumference of said insulating member, wherein

said pipe forming a passage that communicates a gas flow;

said electrically conductive material of said pipe conducts a high frequency current that drives said electrode;

said insulating member is configured for displacement relative to said supply pipe in the direction of a longitudinal axis of said supply pipe, and

said sealing member is configured to frictionally fix said insulating member relative to said supply pipe.

40. (Previously Presented) The applicator of claim 39, wherein said insulating member is configured for limited displacement between a first position in which said insulating member

covers said electrode and a second position in which said insulating member does not cover said electrode.

41. (Previously Presented) The applicator of claim 39, wherein said insulating member is an insulating tube configured for sliding engagement with an outer circumference of said supply pipe.

42. (Previously Presented) The applicator of claim 39, wherein said seal is a fluid-proof seal.

43. (Previously Presented) The applicator of claim 39, comprising an insulating cap configured for detachably fastening said applicator on a handle of said instrument.

44. (Previously Presented) The applicator of claim 43, wherein said supply pipe extends through said insulating cap for communicating said gas flow and said high frequency current through said insulating cap.

45. (Previously Presented) The applicator of claim 43, wherein said insulating cap is configured to cooperate with said insulating member to limit said displacement thereof relative to said supply pipe.

46. (Canceled)

47. (Previously Presented) The applicator of claim 39, wherein said electrode is attached to said supply pipe via an inner surface of said supply pipe.